
By: **Delegates Owings and Branch**
Introduced and read first time: January 27, 2003
Assigned to: Economic Matters

Committee Report: Favorable with amendments
House action: Adopted
Read second time: February 19, 2003

CHAPTER _____

1 AN ACT concerning

2 **Public Utilities - Natural Gas Universal Service Program Task Force**

3 FOR the purpose of establishing a Natural Gas Universal Service Program Task
4 Force to study the energy needs of low-income gas ~~and electric~~ customers,
5 including the possible establishment of a natural gas universal service program;
6 providing for the membership, charge, and responsibilities of the Task Force;
7 requiring the Public Service Commission to provide staff support for the Task
8 Force; requiring the Task Force to report to certain persons by a certain date;
9 providing for the termination of this Act; and generally relating to energy needs
10 of low-income customers ~~and~~ natural gas universal service, and the Natural
11 Gas Universal Service Program Task Force.

12 BY adding to
13 Article - Public Utility Companies
14 Section 7-608
15 Annotated Code of Maryland
16 (1998 Volume and 2002 Supplement)

17 SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF
18 MARYLAND, That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

19 **Article - Public Utility Companies**

20 7-608.

21 (A) THERE IS A NATURAL GAS UNIVERSAL SERVICE PROGRAM TASK FORCE.

22 (B) (1) THE TASK FORCE CONSISTS OF THE FOLLOWING MEMBERS:

1 (I) ONE MEMBER OF THE HOUSE OF DELEGATES APPOINTED BY
2 THE SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE;

3 (II) ONE MEMBER OF THE SENATE OF MARYLAND APPOINTED BY
4 THE PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE;

5 (III) THE CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMISSION OR A DESIGNEE OF THE
6 CHAIRMAN;

7 (IV) THE PEOPLE'S COUNSEL OR A DESIGNEE OF THE PEOPLE'S
8 COUNSEL;

9 (V) THE SECRETARY OF HUMAN RESOURCES OR A DESIGNEE OF
10 THE SECRETARY;

11 (VI) THE DIRECTOR OF THE MARYLAND ENERGY ADMINISTRATION
12 OR A DESIGNEE OF THE DIRECTOR; AND

13 (VII) THE FOLLOWING MEMBERS APPOINTED BY THE GOVERNOR:

14 1. TWO MEMBERS REPRESENTING NATURAL GAS
15 COMPANIES OPERATING IN THE STATE, APPOINTED BY THE CHAIRMAN OF THE
16 COMMISSION INCLUDING ONE THAT PRIMARILY SERVES RURAL AREAS AND ONE
17 THAT PRIMARILY SERVES URBAN OR SUBURBAN AREAS;

18 ~~(VIII)~~ 2. ONE MEMBER REPRESENTING INDUSTRIAL AND
19 COMMERCIAL GAS CUSTOMERS IN THE STATE, APPOINTED FROM A LIST SUBMITTED
20 BY THE MARYLAND CHAMBER OF COMMERCE;

21 ~~(IX)~~ 3. ONE MEMBER REPRESENTING RESIDENTIAL GAS
22 CUSTOMERS IN THE STATE, APPOINTED BY THE PEOPLE'S COUNSEL;

23 ~~(X)~~ 4. ONE MEMBER REPRESENTING LOW-INCOME
24 RESIDENTIAL GAS CUSTOMERS IN THE STATE, APPOINTED BY THE SECRETARY OF
25 HUMAN RESOURCES;

26 ~~(XI)~~ 5. ONE MEMBER REPRESENTING MUNICIPAL
27 CORPORATIONS IN THE STATE, APPOINTED FROM A LIST SUBMITTED BY THE
28 MARYLAND MUNICIPAL LEAGUE;

29 ~~(XII)~~ 6. ONE MEMBER REPRESENTING COUNTIES IN THE STATE,
30 APPOINTED FROM A LIST SUBMITTED BY THE MARYLAND ASSOCIATION OF
31 COUNTIES; AND

32 ~~(XIII)~~ 7. TWO MEMBERS REPRESENTING CHARITABLE
33 ORGANIZATIONS THAT PROVIDE ASSISTANCE TO LOW-INCOME FAMILIES IN THE
34 STATE, APPOINTED BY THE PEOPLE'S COUNSEL.

35 (2) ~~IN CONSULTATION WITH THE OTHER APPOINTING ENTITIES, THE~~
36 CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMISSION THE GOVERNOR SHALL COORDINATE THE

1 APPOINTMENT PROCESS FOR THE TASK FORCE IN AN EFFORT TO ACHIEVE
2 DIVERSITY OF GEOGRAPHICAL REPRESENTATION OF THE STATE ON THE TASK
3 FORCE.

4 (3) THE TASK FORCE SHALL SELECT A CHAIRMAN FROM AMONG ITS
5 MEMBERS.

6 (4) A MEMBER OF THE TASK FORCE:

7 (I) MAY NOT RECEIVE COMPENSATION AS A MEMBER OF THE TASK
8 FORCE; BUT

9 (II) IS ENTITLED TO REIMBURSEMENT FOR EXPENSES UNDER THE
10 STANDARD STATE TRAVEL REGULATIONS, AS PROVIDED IN THE STATE BUDGET.

11 (C) THE TASK FORCE SHALL:

12 (1) IDENTIFY POPULATIONS OF LOW-INCOME GAS CUSTOMERS IN NEED
13 OF ASSISTANCE IN MEETING THEIR HEATING NEEDS;

14 (2) IDENTIFY FORMS OF ASSISTANCE THAT MAY BE APPROPRIATE FOR
15 LOW-INCOME GAS CUSTOMERS, INCLUDING FINANCIAL SUPPORT AND ENERGY
16 CONSERVATION MEASURES;

17 (3) ANALYZE FEDERAL, STATE, LOCAL, AND PRIVATE CHARITABLE
18 ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS IN THIS STATE AND OTHER STATES THAT PROVIDE
19 ASSISTANCE TO LOW-INCOME GAS CUSTOMERS ~~AND ELECTRIC CUSTOMERS~~;

20 (4) IDENTIFY SOURCES OF FUNDING FOR LOW-INCOME GAS CUSTOMER
21 ASSISTANCE, INCLUDING A SURCHARGE ON COMMERCIAL, INDUSTRIAL, AND
22 RESIDENTIAL GAS CUSTOMERS IN THE STATE;

23 (5) DEVELOP MODELS FOR ASSISTANCE OF LOW-INCOME GAS
24 CUSTOMERS; AND

25 (6) RECOMMEND OPTIONS FOR MEETING THE ENERGY NEEDS OF
26 LOW-INCOME GAS CUSTOMERS, INCLUDING OPTIONS FOR IMPLEMENTING AND
27 ADMINISTERING A NATURAL GAS UNIVERSAL SERVICE PROGRAM.

28 (D) THE TASK FORCE SHALL MEET AT LEAST FOUR TIMES A YEAR, AT THE
29 TIMES AND PLACES THAT IT DETERMINES.

30 (E) THE TASK FORCE SHALL CONDUCT PUBLIC MEETINGS THROUGHOUT THE
31 STATE IN THE COURSE OF ITS STUDY UNDER THIS SECTION.

32 (F) ON OR BEFORE DECEMBER 31, ~~2004~~ 2003, THE TASK FORCE SHALL REPORT
33 TO THE COMMISSION, THE GOVERNOR, AND, SUBJECT TO § 2-1246 OF THE STATE
34 GOVERNMENT ARTICLE, THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON THE STUDY AND
35 RECOMMENDATIONS, INCLUDING ANY PROPOSED LEGISLATION NECESSARY OR
36 ADVISABLE TO IMPLEMENT A NATURAL GAS UNIVERSAL SERVICE PROGRAM.

1 (G) THE COMMISSION SHALL PROVIDE STAFF SUPPORT TO THE TASK FORCE.

2 SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect
3 July 1, 2003. It shall remain effective for a period of ~~2~~ years 1 year and, at the end of
4 June 30, ~~2005~~ 2004, with no further action required by the General Assembly, this Act
5 shall be abrogated and of no further force and effect.